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State Agricultural Development Board Approves \$381,000 for Catfish Cooperative Processing Facility in Mayfield

The Kentucky Agricultural Development Board, chaired by Governor Paul Patton, voted today to approve \$381,000 in a grant request submitted by the Purchase Area Aquaculture Cooperative in Mayfield. The award of state agricultural development funds will go to expand a catfish processing facility, purchase processing equipment, and support marketing initiatives and outreach efforts of the aquaculture cooperative.

The state board investment represents the first aquaculture project approved for state funding by the Agricultural Development Board. The effort is intended to facilitate the growth and expansion of a cooperative of several area farmers looking to replace recent declines in tobacco income through commercial aquaculture production. The University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service, Kentucky State University aquaculture specialists, and the Kentucky Aquaculture Task Force endorsed the project.

The new facilities will meet all federal, state and county codes for food production and provide a market outlet for area catfish producers. The cooperative currently includes 34 area producers, but expects to grow to 50 producers as a result of this new investment. Governor Patton praised the board's action and expressed enthusiasm for the potential of aquaculture in Kentucky.

"This action means that the Purchase Area Aquaculture Cooperative will be able to better meet the needs of their customers in marketing their catfish this year and in the future. While this money will be spent on facilities and equipment, it is an investment in an aggressive group of producers looking for income alternatives, in their agricultural diversification efforts, and in the future of agriculture in our state," said Governor Paul Patton.

The award was made as one of twenty-three projects approved by the Board during its meeting today. The Board approved a total of \$593,423 in state level projects, including the orchard projects, and \$1,265,877 in a variety of county-level programs.

Staff of the Agricultural Development Board will meet soon with the recipients to work out the details for the award.